

# Candida- An opportunistic yeast

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Candida albicans is a very complex organism that releases over 80 known toxins that adversely affect our body. Candida is normally present in the skin, vagina and the mucous membranes of our gastrointestinal and upper respiratory tracts. All of us have some Candida organisms living inside of us and it only becomes a problem when the levels of them become too high and the body cannot cope anymore. Candida growth is normally kept in balance by beneficial or "good" bacteria and our immune system. However Candida is an opportunistic organism and if our immune system becomes depressed, inefficient or overwhelmed, the tenuous balance is upset and the good bacteria are destroyed. Candida then multiplies and an overgrowth (chronic infection) results. If left untreated, a chronic Candida infection and overgrowth can severely debilitate us, leaving us susceptible to more serious diseases.

Candida produces two chemicals called acetaldehyde and ethanol. Acetaldehyde disrupts cell membrane function and alters protein synthesis. (Acetaldehyde is also a breakdown product of alcohol and is thought to cause the "fuzzy brain" symptoms of a hangover.) These chemicals must then be detoxified from the body as our metabolism can't convert them into useful compounds. When the circulating load of these chemicals is too great, poor memory, lightheadedness, fatigue, inability to concentrate, and depression can result.

Candida can be difficult to eradicate as it has the ability to mutate and develop branching threads called mycelia, which can penetrate the mucous membrane of the intestinal tract. In addition, Candida has the ability to change its cell membrane structure in order to escape the effects of single drug therapy.

## **How an overgrowth occurs**

Candida overgrowth is not a new problem. The overuse of antibiotics wipes out the number of good bacteria, meaning there is no competition for the Candida (which are generally antibiotic resistant) allowing them to multiply and proliferate becoming a chronic infection. Also many meats contain high levels of antibiotics which for some people are a constant source of antibiotics we often forget about. Low stomach acid levels also foster Candida growth. Oral contraceptive pills, cortisone, and other steroids and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs cause hormonal imbalances in our body, encouraging Candida to grow more abundantly. Other conditions that may upset the normal balance of our intestinal bacteria are debility due to other infection, disease or ageing; drug or alcohol abuse; suppression of the immune system to avoid organ transplant rejection; and use of chemotherapeutic agents in cancer treatment.

Candida excretes toxins that circulate through the body, further weakening the immune system. They also produce long root-like structures that penetrate intestinal walls leaving microscopic holes which allow toxins, undigested food particles, bacteria and yeasts to enter the blood stream. This is known as "leaky gut Syndrome" and can be involved in allergies, food intolerances and many health problems. The damage to the intestinal walls also results in reduced nutrient absorption and can contribute to multiple nutrient deficiencies.

Candida also seriously interferes with the digestion and absorption of nutrients from the intestinal tract; as a result, prolonged, untreated infection can lead to overt nutrient deficiency. This reduced nutrient absorption means that the immune system is weakened due to insufficient nutrients being absorbed. A lowered immune system allows Candida to multiply and if unchallenged, Candida can spread and involve more tissues: membranes swell, organisms multiply; and nasal, throat, sinus, ear, bronchial, bladder, vaginal and other infections develop.

In addition, Candida also affects the parietal cells of the stomach, ovary and thyroid cells. This can lead to an autoimmune response to these cells and can contribute to abnormal function of these organs and cells. It can also be an indirect tumor promoter and thus needs to be controlled in any individual that has cancer.

## **Symptoms:**

*Emotional/mental:* Severe depression, confusion, extreme irritability, anxiety, memory lapses and short-term memory loss, inability to concentrate, difficulty in reasoning, drowsiness, insomnia, lethargy, and loss of self-confidence.

*Hormonal:* Disrupted hormone production in the thyroid, adrenal glands, ovaries, pituitary gland, or testes cause the entire endocrine system to function poorly. Candida also interferes with the receptor sites for hormones, further contributing to the problem.

*Hypersensitivity reactions to Candida or its by-products:* Asthma, headaches, bronchitis, hay fever, earaches, hives, skin rashes, and severe chemical and food sensitivities result from these reactions.

*Intestinal and genitourinary tracts:* yeast vaginitis, menstrual complaints, bowel problems, such as bloating, constipation, diarrhea, and gas; and inflammations of the prostate, esophagus, stomach lining, colon, and bladder can signal the presence of Candida.

*Nose and throat:* Severe sinus headaches may be caused by colonies of Candida growing in nasal passages. A white furry tongue can also be a symptom of Candida overgrowth.

*Skin:* unrelenting skin itching and deep ear itching are aggravating symptoms of Candida. The itching occurs deep beneath the surface of the skin with no visible rash and is not relieved by scratching or rubbing. It may be caused by a hypersensitivity reaction either to antibodies produced by our body or to metabolic toxins produced by the yeast.

*Worsening of existing symptoms:* weakness, fatigue, fleeting muscle and joint pains, dizziness, difficulty in swallowing, easily detected body and breath odor, and acne and other distinctive skin rashes can all be indicators of Candida. Sugar cravings and hypoglycemic symptoms are common.

### **What can be done to correct it?**

As you can now appreciate, Candida is a very tricky microorganism and to clear an overgrowth from the body requires a lot of persistence, time and the correction of any affected systems in the body, especially the immune system. One of the most beneficial things that you can do is to undertake an intensive digestive system detoxification and repair program, tailored exclusively for your needs. This involves eliminating all pathogenic bacteria, microbes and Candida from your body through the use of strong antimicrobial herbs and nutrients designed to kill and remove any overgrowth of such organisms. This needs to be coupled with digestive support to ensure the proper breakdown of your food and the detection and removal of any food allergens. Immune support is crucial as an overgrowth of Candida that's been present for some time generally results in lowered immunity. (Remember that when the immune system is lowered, Candida can proliferate further).

After the overgrowth of any pathogenic organisms has been addressed, it's essential to replace the levels of the friendly bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. If feed and supported, these so called friendly bacteria will multiply and readily establish themselves in your digestive tract, crowd out the unfriendly bacteria, ultimately keeping their numbers in check and your digestive system healthy. After the health of the bowel has been established, the liver needs to be supported to enable it to metabolise and process the toxins produced by Candida, clearing them from your body.

The entire process can take around one to six months to do it properly but in really severe cases it may take several years to fully restore balance to the body. The length of time taken will ultimately depend on each individual's severity of Candida overgrowth, the strength of their immune system, their gastrointestinal sensitivity and their ability to adhere to the recommendations outlined specifically for them.

As dismal as all of this may sound there's no need to feel put off or disheartened if you are suffering from Candida as it can be treated. With persistence and commitment, coupled with the correct nutritional support for each individual's requirements, an overgrowth of Candida can be eradicated and good health and vitality restored.